Let's Talk About Schools

85-2373/

TABLE OF CONTENTS

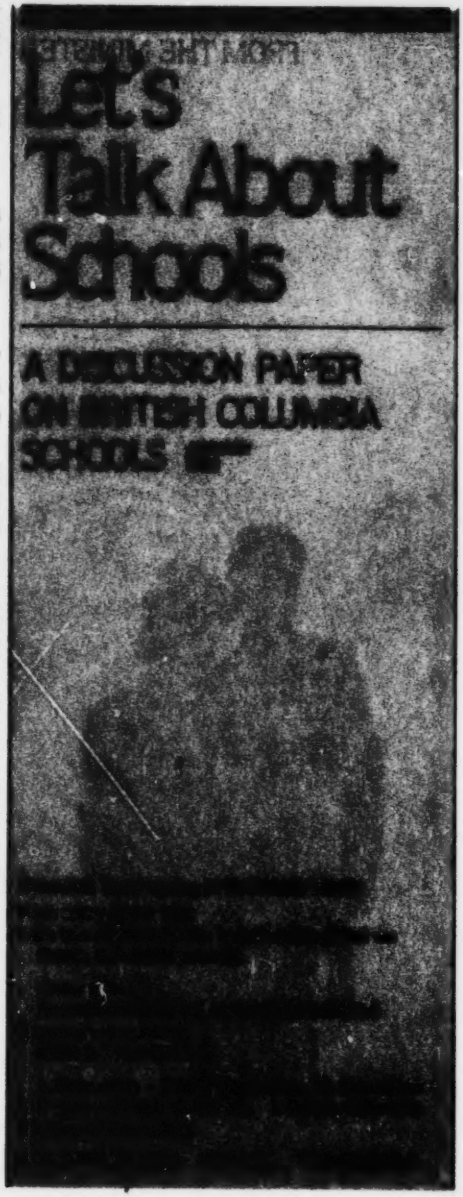
A Message from the Minister 2

I. INTRODUCTION
- 1.1 The Task of the Advisory Committee 4
- 1.2 The Advisory Committee's Point of View 5
- 1.3 Scope and Objectives of the Discussion Paper 5

II. SCHOOLS AND SOCIETY
- 2.1 Education and Schooling: Keeping Our Terms Straight 7
- 2.2 Goals of Education and Schooling 9
- 2.3 Curriculum and Instruction 10
- 2.4 Diversity in Society and Schools 11
- 2.5 Standards of Achievement in Schools 12
- 2.6 Technological Innovation and Schools 13
- 2.7 School-Community Relations 14

III. SCHOOL GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT, AND THE PEOPLE IN THE SYSTEM
- 3.1 Legislative Provisions for School Governance and Management 18
- 3.2 Key Governance and Management Issues 20
  - 3.21 Labour Relations 20
  - 3.22 Financing Provincial Schools 23
  - 3.23 School District Budgets 24
- 3.3 The Responsibilities and Rights of Parents and Pupils 25
- 3.4 Teacher Professionalism 26
- 3.5 Administrative Professionalism 28

IV. SUMMARY STATEMENT 30



A MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

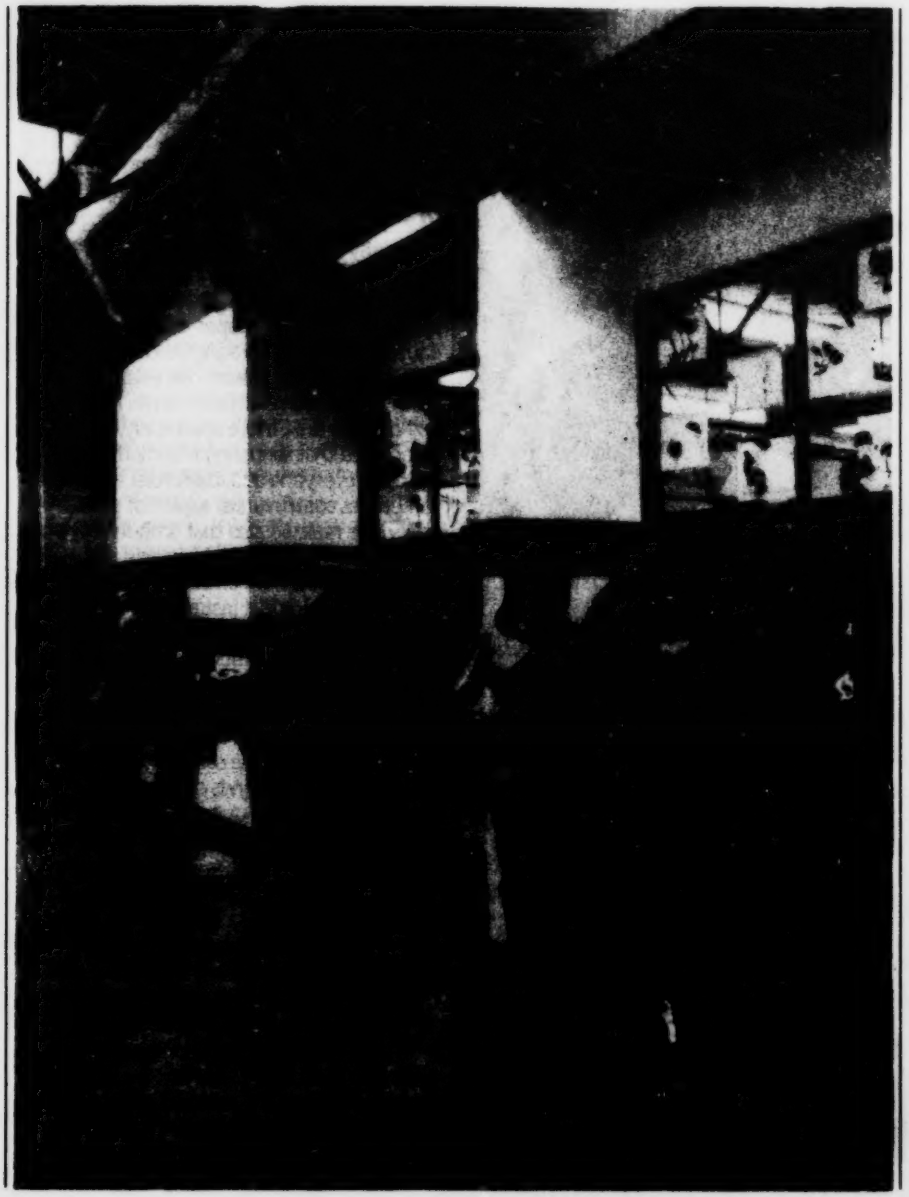
To be effective, schools, like other social institutions, must respond to the world around them. Changes in social and economic conditions have important implications for schools and, because of this, it is necessary from time to time to review how well school systems meet pupil needs and community expectations. In British Columbia, such a review now appears warranted. Shifts in the economy and in patterns of employment, as well as other social developments, are challenging our schools and educators in new ways. If we are to capitalize on the promise of tomorrow as a province and as a people, it seems judicious to reflect first upon our objectives for schools and to consider the directions we would like schooling to take in future years. More specifically, it seems important at this point to discuss a number of questions which relate to the context in which schools operate, the goals and structure of our school system, the relationship between schooling and education, the responsibilities of schools, and the part teachers, administrators, parents, and trustees play in schooling.

To address such questions, and to encourage public, parental, and professional discussion about schooling, in July, 1984, I called together an Advisory Committee to consider some broad questions associated with Provincial schooling and to make their findings known. With some changes in membership, this Advisory Committee laboured vigorously throughout the summer and autumn months to prepare a paper which outlines important issues for schools, and which focuses attention on areas of critical concern. The Advisory Committee has completed its task in producing a document titled *Let's Talk About Schools: A Discussion Paper On British Columbia Schools*. This paper, I hope, will stimulate discussion about the future direction and emphasis of Provincial schooling. In turn, this public and professional discussion will serve as a means of guiding revisions to existing school legislation and in planning school programs for the years ahead. The *Let's Talk About Schools* paper, therefore, represents an invitation to all British Columbians to make their views on schooling known and, in doing so, to help shape schools of the future in this Province.

In keeping with the importance of this public and professional discussion about schools, I have now asked that a Provincial School Review Committee be assembled to accommodate the discussion process. This Provincial School Review Committee will be made up of individuals familiar with various parts of Provincial schooling and sensitive to the needs of different public and professional constituencies throughout the Province. It will be the task of this Committee to organize and encourage Provincial discussion about schooling and to inform me about community ideas and sentiments.

Jack Heinrich

The Honourable Jack Heinrich
Minister of Education



I. INTRODUCTION

1.1

The Task of the Advisory Committee

Slightly more than five months ago, members of the Advisory Committee were asked by the Minister of Education to prepare a discussion paper outlining critical issues and questions facing schools today. In accepting this assignment, we recognized that we had been charged with an important and difficult task. More specifically, we recognized that schooling is something affecting everyone and, therefore, a vital and sometimes controversial aspect of public policy. We realized also that schools play an instrumental role in Provincial and national life, that schools have emerged as one of our most accessible social institutions, and that they remain institutions which embody the imagination and aspirations of many individuals. For these reasons, we were struck by the need to consider carefully, and as objectively as we could, the issues and questions we would raise and, at the same time, to provide a basis for broader kinds of discussion desired by the community.

"Two decades have passed since the state of the Province's schools was reviewed . . ."

In preparing this discussion paper, we were also conscious of the fact that more than two decades have passed since the Chant Commission reviewed the state of Provincial schools, and that significant changes in schools and society had sub-

sequently taken place. Indeed, the Committee felt there was good reason to initiate a new dialogue on schooling among the people of this Province, members of the school community, and the Provincial and local governments who serve them. Here in British Columbia, and elsewhere, there has been mounting interest in discussing the directions schools should take and how they should respond to changing economic and social conditions.

As a Committee, we were therefore pleased to undertake an assignment which reflects the temper of the times and which promises to provide a point of departure for a review of key issues and questions confronting schools. Over the course of this work, it became evident to us that our schools will be better prepared to meet the challenges of tomorrow if we, as a community, take time now to think about and discuss the possibilities and alternatives that lie before us. If our efforts promote such discussion, our work will have been fruitful.

1.2

The Advisory Committee's Point of View

In preparing this discussion paper, the Advisory Committee has been guided by certain assumptions and beliefs about schools and society — assumptions and beliefs which, to some extent, define the Committee's social and educational philosophy. We believe, for example, that society has a right and a responsibility to establish institutions such as schools to ensure the survival of the human community as well as to maintain democratic processes and other Canadian traditions deemed vital to our quality of life. We believe that, next to the family, the school is regarded as one of the institutions most instrumental in perpetuating society and that complex societies, such as ours, require organized systems of schooling to instruct the young, to prepare them for citizenship, and to help them understand the values and traditions of the communities in which they live. We believe, therefore, that the Province has a responsibility to stand in trusteeship over schooling and to provide young people with those things which society, through its schools, can offer.

Furthermore, we believe schooling should be based on democratic processes of representation and participation. The Advisory Committee acknowledges that both the public and school professionals have a right to express their views about schools, to make representation through others, and to participate in policy making according to established procedures. It is imperative, we believe, for all groups and individuals in British Columbia to enjoy both formal and informal opportunities to influence the shape and direction of schooling.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we believe that schools exist to assist young people in achieving their full potential. This potential, we feel, can be best realized when all participants in schooling — pupils, parents, the public, school trustees, administrators, and teachers — recognize their complementary roles and responsibilities and work in harmony toward common goals.

1.3

Scope and Objectives of the Discussion Paper

Since its inception, the Advisory Committee has attempted to take a broad perspective in its study and review of issues and questions facing Provincial schools. We have entertained, for example, questions about the structure and processes of schooling, about the social assumptions upon which schooling is founded, about the rights and responsibilities of those who have interest in schools, and about public and parental expectations for British Columbia's school system. We trust that this perspective is illustrated in the scope of this paper.

Our efforts to underline what we regard as important issues and questions are intended to guide and focus discussion, not to constrain it. Early in our work, we recognized the difficulty of trying to inform British Columbians about the issues at hand while, at the same time, stimulating free and open discussion. Certainly, this difficulty presented a problem to us in the technical preparation of this paper. We tried to address this problem in the format selected. For each area of discussion, we begin by providing a background summary of the context in which the issues or questions under examination appear. Then, wherever possible, we outline current legislative provisions or conditions pertinent to the discussion. Finally, we list a suggested number of questions related to the area of discussion for the reader's consideration and response.

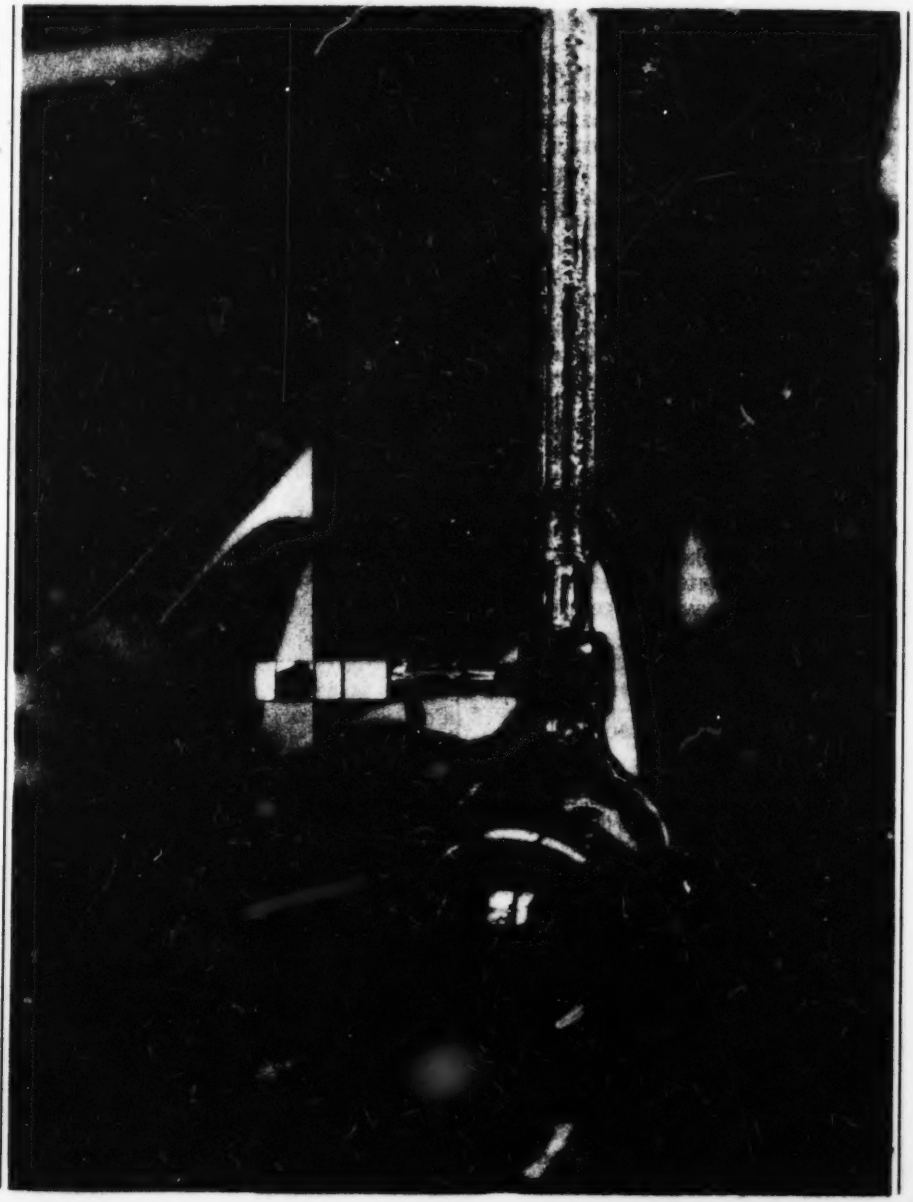
By no means do the issues and questions we raise purport to be an exhaustive list of all the issues and questions that may be raised about schools. Nevertheless, we believe they do reflect some of the more serious issues and questions now confronting the schools of this Province and the people who support

them. Moreover, we hope that the issues and questions raised in this paper will help generate other issues and questions related to schooling that people feel to be important.

"British Columbians are encouraged to express their opinions on *what is* and *what ought to be* in their schools."

In short, we have tried to produce a document which will encourage British Columbians to express their views and to comment upon *what is* and *what ought to be* in Provincial schools. We have also sought to provide a means by which people's views on schooling could be communicated to school professionals and to those who make policies and decisions about schools. Such information, we feel, is valuable, particularly at a time when the direction and emphasis of schooling is being discussed, and when revisions to existing school legislation are being contemplated.

The paper that follows is divided into two parts. The first part deals with broad issues and questions pertaining to schools and society. The second part comprises structural and operational issues pertaining to such matters as school governance and management, employee relations, teacher and administrative professionalism, parental and pupil rights and responsibilities, and school district finance and budgets.



II. SCHOOLS AND SOCIETY

Since the establishment of public schooling in British Columbia more than a century ago, schools have been charged with tasks quite apart from those associated with the intellectual development of the young. Over this period of time, there has been considerable debate among school professionals and the communities they serve about the purposes of schooling, the role of schools in society, and the relationship of schooling to the world of work.

Discussion about these matters has frequently crystallized around questions such as: *"How can equality of educational opportunity be assured for everyone?"; "What should schools teach?"; "Should schooling prepare youngsters for careers, or provide the rudiments of a general education?"; "Should schools assume responsibilities which once belonged to the family?"; "Can and should schools serve as agencies for reforming society?";* and *"How can schooling be made relevant to society's emerging needs and circumstances?*

Such questions, of course, are not new: they have been asked in the past and they will be asked again in the future. They are questions every generation raises and redefines in light of changing historical circumstances. They are also questions of enduring value that lie close to the heart of what schooling is about and what the public expects from its schools.

This section of the review document attempts to identify some important areas of discussion that have to do with the broad issue of the school's relationship to society. In this part of the paper, we look at distinctions between education and schooling, curricular issues regarding what should be taught, questions raised by diversity in society and schooling, school standards, issues related to technological innovation, and the nature of school-community relations. Brief introductory information is presented in each of the following areas of discussion to provide a context for questions and issues that may be raised. The Advisory Committee hopes that readers will consider these issues and think about the questions we have identified for your consideration.

"*Education* and *schooling* are sometimes used as interchangeable terms . . . such use of these terms is misleading."

2.1

Education and Schooling: Keeping Our Terms Straight

Education and *schooling* are sometimes used as interchangeable terms to describe the process of learning that takes place within schools. Such use of these terms, although commonplace, is misleading because it suggests that schools are responsible for the overall *education* of individuals and does not allow for the fact that many other agencies and institutions bear responsibility for *education*. For this reason, we believe it is necessary to define and use these terms more concisely in order to describe accurately the responsibilities and functions of schools.

Education may be defined as the total of our life experiences — an accumulation of experiences that may be planned or unplanned, structured or informal. It may be considered as a lifelong process that reaches beyond the limits associated with schooling or other forms of formal preparation. As such, it pertains to all the things we learn in life and to the embodiment of those things in our general intellectual, social, human, and vocational development.

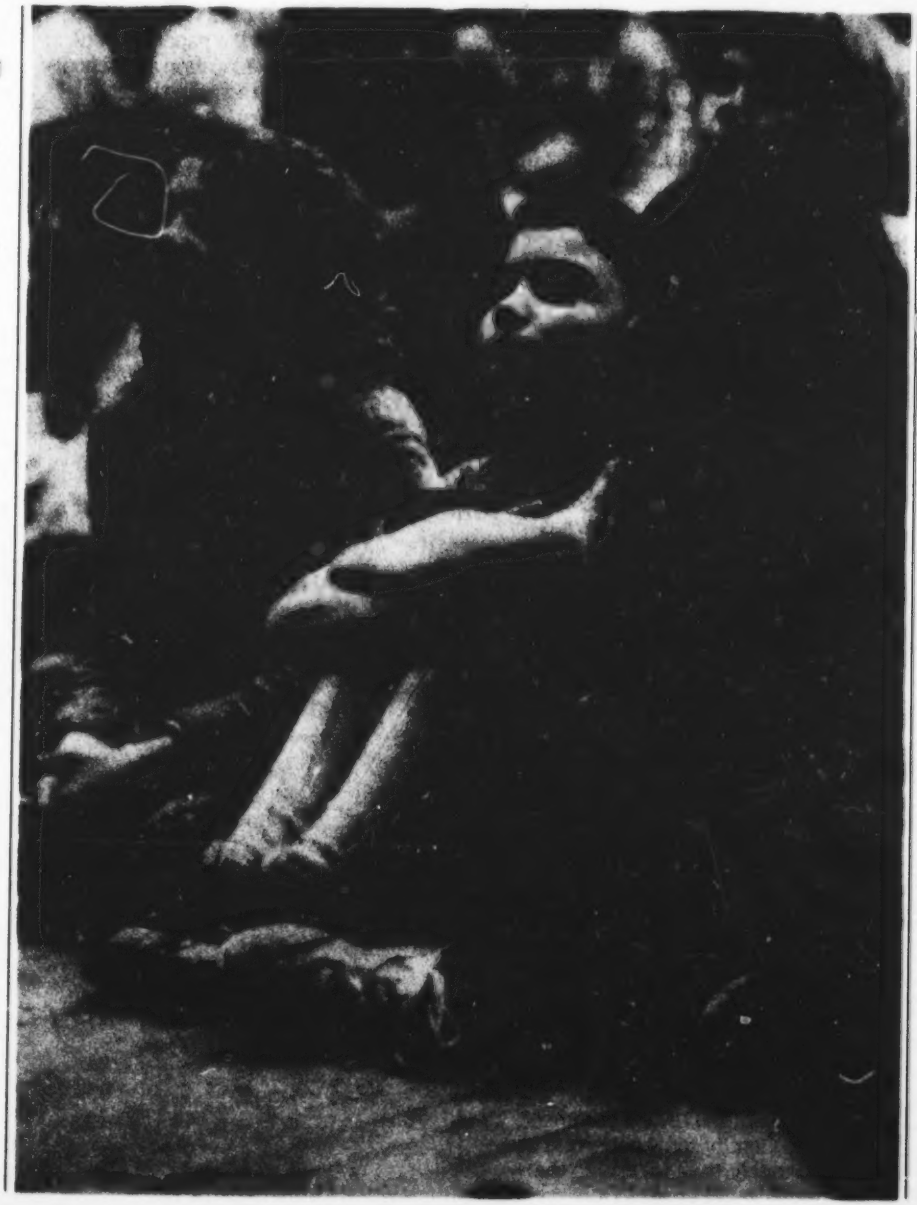
In other words, *education*, in the broadest sense, is a responsibility of the entire community — the home, the church, civic and cultural institutions, service organizations, business and industry, labour groups, and all other associations and individuals capable of assisting in human and social development. Together, schools, parents, and the community at large are partners in helping youngsters reach their educational potential.

Schooling, in contrast, is only a part of *education*, a part that is usually planned, organized, and structured — a part that ordinarily occurs during a particular period in our lives. As one of society's most

important institutions for learning, the school plays an instrumental role in encouraging individuals to pursue the lifelong process of *education*. In delivering certain formal services and programs which we refer to as *schooling*, schools help individuals realize their full educational potential.

Traditionally, the school's primary responsibility has been defined as one which provides for the intellectual development of the young. School activities are planned, taught, and evaluated in ways to cultivate intellectual growth in its various forms. Schools strive to equip pupils with fundamental skills in the areas of reading, writing, and computation, to impart knowledge in core areas of study, and to promote the development of higher-order intellectual skills which give individuals the ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate subject matter.

What pupils learn in schools, of course, has always gone beyond mastering basic skills. It includes learning related to social, emotional, moral, and ethical values. It includes learning that provides an understanding of science and technology, an appreciation of beauty and excellence, an understanding of human relationships, and a sense of what it is to be a citizen of Canada and a member of a community. Within school walls, youngsters learn how to develop their social skills, to work with others, to understand group values, and to respect points of view held by other people. In schools, youngsters learn to discover a sense of meaning in their lives; schools are places where people first develop as individuals and where they learn to see themselves in the context of the world around them.



2.2

Goals of Education and Schooling

The goals of education have been subjects of discussion throughout the ages. Over this long period of time, however, there has emerged a set of goals for education that may be found in almost all cultures and societies. In the broadest sense, these goals represent what society hopes to accomplish through the education of its members. They aim at promoting the fullest development of both individuals and society at large. They point toward ideals of excellence and growth in all aspects of life, and they challenge people to reach their potential.

"These goals represent what society hopes to accomplish through the education of its members."

In addition, over this period of time there has also emerged a belief that schools should pursue the general goals of education but that these goals cannot be achieved by schools alone. In fact, responsibility for these goals has come to be seen as something that is shared among a variety of individuals and agencies, including the schools, as part of a collaborative process within society as a whole. Put simply, although schools exist to assist individuals in achieving these goals, and thereby their full potential as people, it is acknowledged that schools as institutions are limited in what they can do.

The following statement of goals outlines many of the ends to which both education and schooling are directed. It is divided into four categories pertaining to the intellectual, social, human, and vocational development of individuals. It is presented here to inform readers and to encourage discussion about which of these educational goals the schools should pursue.

INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT

To assist in developing the ability of individuals to analyze critically, to reason and think independently, and to acquire basic learning skills and bodies of knowledge.

To assist in developing in individuals a lifelong appreciation of learning, a curiosity about the world around them, and a capacity for creative thought and expression.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

To develop in individuals an understanding concerning their relationship to the world in which they live, the role of the family in society, and their responsibilities and rights as citizens.

To develop in individuals a sense of social responsibility, a tolerance and respect for the ideas and beliefs of others, and an ability to live and work with other people.

To develop in individuals an appreciation for the fine arts and an awareness of the cultural heritage and values of Canadian society and the broader world.

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

To develop in individuals a sense of self-worth, individualism, personal initiative, self-discipline, the importance of the pursuit of excellence, and the satisfaction gained through achievement.

To develop in individuals an understanding of the importance of physical health, emotional well-being and the work and leisure activities which contribute to a good quality of life.

VOCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

To develop in individuals the means to realize their personal potential and to attain their occupational and career objectives.

To develop in individuals effective work habits, a regard for the dignity of work, and the flexibility to deal with change and challenge in the workplace.

To develop in individuals the sense of self-reliance, vision, and confidence vital to the creation of new opportunities for employment.

Suggested Questions to Consider

1. *Do these goals for education accurately reflect our society's beliefs?*
2. *Are all of these goals of equal importance?*
3. *Which goals of education should schools pursue?*

2.3

Curriculum and Instruction

The question of what should be taught in schools has been an issue that has long engaged the attention of school professionals, parents, and other community members. In recent years, rising public demand for greater accountability in schooling and for improved levels of pupil competence in basic areas of instruction has intensified debate over what traditionally has been a contentious area of discussion, namely the nature of the school curriculum.

"Curriculum refers to what is taught . . ."

The term *curriculum*, as it is used here, refers to what is to be taught, or the body of courses that comprises a structured school program. In British Columbia and elsewhere, there has always been some disagreement within communities over what should be learned by pupils, what bodies of knowledge and skills should be common to those who attend schools, who should determine the curriculum, and what the processes should be for determining it.

Discussions about curriculum are also made more complex by instructional processes. Diversity in the instructional styles and methods employed by teachers can sometimes lead to variation in how a curriculum is delivered. To ensure that pupils reach a prescribed level of achievement, the Ministry of Education has identified methods and materials as guides to instruction. There has been discussion within the community of school professionals about whether these guides assist teachers or infringe upon their prerogatives as professionals.

Current Provisions and Conditions

- *The Provincial curriculum is presently determined by elected representatives of the people — the legislature and school boards. Their authority in this regard is based on the proposition that the public, through its representatives, has the right to determine what is taught in schools.*

- *In addition to prescribing or authorizing courses which comprise the Provincial curriculum, Provincial authorities have generally determined intended learning outcomes for pupils.*
- *In elementary schools, courses and intended outcomes vary little from school to school throughout the Province.*
- *In secondary schools, pupils enjoy broader course choice, including a choice of locally developed courses; therefore, curriculum diversity is relatively greater than in elementary schools.*
- *Instruction is the communication of the classroom. It is what teachers provide and pupils receive so that the final outcomes of the curriculum are achieved.*
- *To assist in the instructional process, the Ministry of Education provides prescribed and authorized learning materials to schools. This practice is carried out to ensure:*

  (a) uniformity from school to school in curriculum content;

  (b) uniformity in the quality of learning materials supplied to each child;

  (c) that transfers from school to school are possible with a minimum of educational disruptions for the child; and

  (d) that materials are purchased in effective and efficient ways.
- *In addition to supplying the content of all Provincially developed courses, Provincial authorities also issue curriculum guides, some of which indicate a preferred methodology.*

Suggested Questions to Consider

4. *What should be taught and learned in schools?*
5. *How should it be taught?*
6. *In determining what should be taught and learned in schools, what should be the role of Provincial authorities? Local school boards? Professionals? Parents? The public? Pupils?*

2.4

Diversity in Society and Schools

British Columbia schools operate in a complex and diverse social environment. Part of this diversity is a product of this Province's unique geography; part of it stems from the racial and cultural richness of British Columbia society. Part of it also is a result of broad social shifts that have occurred throughout the world since mid-century.

Since the Chant Commission report on schools in 1960, important social changes have shaped the way British Columbians look at their schools. Changes in work and family life, changing definitions of parenthood, changing employment patterns, and changes in life styles and social values have altered the way in which we live. The institutions of family and school, for example, have been influenced in recent decades by economic conditions, new social attitudes, changing roles within families, and by limited public consensus on many matters.

"Within a context of social diversity, there may also be found diverse forms of schooling."

Within this context of social diversity, there may also be found diversity in the forms of schooling available. The public now recognizes options for schooling outside the established public school system. Native peoples are now establishing and controlling their own schools. Independent schools challenge public schools for pupils. Non-traditional or alternative forms of schooling challenge traditional forms, and the private commercial sector now markets an increasing array of instructional packages. At the same time, certain segments of the public express greater interest than they once did in determining where their children go to school, who teaches them, and what they learn. Certain segments of the public also exhibit a willingness to purchase schooling for their children, or to supplement the basic schooling their children now receive.

Some observers view these developments with alarm and suggest this diversity will ultimately result in a serious decline of public schooling, and lead to a variety of standards. Others disagree, viewing developments which enhance consumer choice and competition in schooling as beneficial.

Changing forms of schooling and methods of delivery also bring into question where schooling should take place and for how long. In British Columbia and elsewhere, it traditionally has been assumed that in order to develop an informed citizenry, and to prepare individuals for life in society, it is necessary to enforce school attendance. Today, however, this assumption is being examined — particularly by parents who wish to teach their children at home, and also by private firms who claim they can instruct the young in other settings as well as or better than schools can. As a result, a new notion of *attaining required levels of schooling* has emerged to challenge the traditional idea of *compulsory attendance*. This new notion is founded on pupils' achieving basic levels of skill and knowledge in schools, or elsewhere, irrespective of school schedules and in keeping with their own rates of progress and development.

Current Provisions and Conditions

- *All children are entitled to 13 years of schooling (including kindergarten). Subject to certain exemptions, children must attend school from the age of seven to their 15th birthday.*
- *Of the 502,000 school-age children in British Columbia, 472,000 attend public schools; approximately 23,400 attend "group two" independent schools (operating with 30% Provincial funding and following the Provincial curriculum); about 800 are in "group one" independent schools (9% Provincial funding and not following the Provincial curriculum, but undertaking not to teach religious intolerance or racial or ethnic superiority); approximately 5,000 attend other independent schools (not Provincially-funded or supervised); and about 1,000 pupils attend "home schools" which follow the Provincial curriculum, largely through correspondence methods.*
- *Commercial firms also offer instructional programs, particularly firms in the computer industry specializing in software development.*

Suggested Questions to Consider

7. *Are our public schools capable of responding to the many and varied needs of the people of British Columbia?*
8. *Are there other forms of schooling which should be publicly supported? To what extent? How should such forms of schooling be monitored, and by whom?*
9. *Should public choice in schooling be enhanced? If so, how?*

"Achievement standards for schools have long been a topic of interest."

2.5

Standards of Achievement in Schools

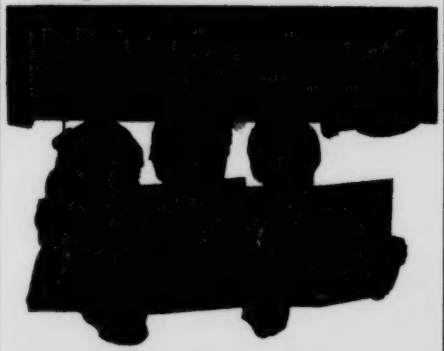
Achievement standards for schools have long been a topic of public, parental, and professional interest. In recent years, however, new attention has been directed toward discussions about school outcomes and minimum competency levels in areas of basic instruction, as well as the relationship between achievement and class size. In part, this trend has been a result of public demands for greater accountability and for accurate measurement of what schooling achieves. In part, also, emphasis on school standards has grown out of fears about declining pupil abilities and the *knowledge gap* that may exist between Canada and other advanced industrialized nations.

Within a context where there is possibility for greater consumer choice in schooling, and where competition among various forms of schooling may intensify, the question of standards becomes an even more complex issue. The fact that different institutions or agencies may be involved in schooling the young suggests that a variety of standards could exist, and that pupils may require protection to ensure they receive adequate instruction.

How this protection should be provided is emerging as an important issue in British Columbia and elsewhere. Some individuals contend that market forces will prevail to ensure quality schooling in a diverse marketplace; others argue that safeguards of the marketplace may not be adequate and that government should monitor standards for all agencies providing instruction to the young.

Current Provisions and Conditions

- *In public schools and in "group two" independent schools, systems exist to evaluate achievement through learning assessment programs, examinations, and specific actions related to evaluation requested by the Minister. There are also accreditation procedures.*
- *School districts now have their own methods to evaluate pupil achievement and progress.*
- *In other independent schools and in cases of home-schooling, Provincial authorities are not aware and do not have the ability to find out what learnings are being attempted or what achievement or progress is being made.*



Suggested Questions to Consider

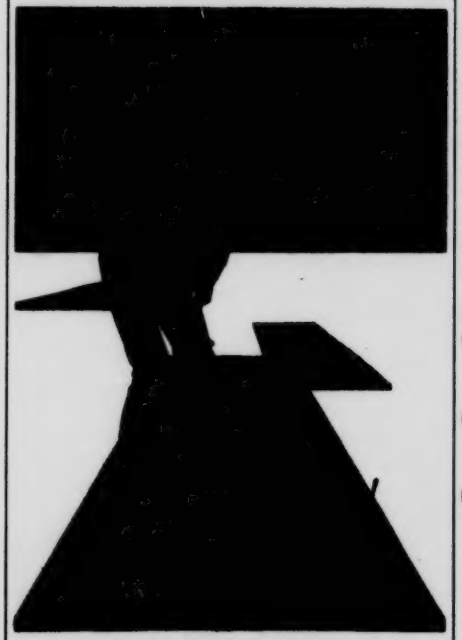
10. *What standards should be established for all schools, public and otherwise? Should standards be established for all grades and all subjects? Who should establish these standards? Should standards be monitored? How? By whom?*
11. *To what extent should Province-wide examinations exist? What purposes can such examinations serve?*
12. *To what extent should entrance requirements set by post-secondary institutions determine secondary school curricula and standards?*

2.6

Technological Innovation and Schools

Technology, particularly the computer, is profoundly influencing virtually all aspects of life — and the school is no exception. Computers, video cassettes, software packages and the like are already being rapidly incorporated into schools and are shaping the ways young people learn. New technology has made possible opportunities for learning unimaginable a decade ago — underlining the fact that learning is not confined to schools, and that schooling in the future may take place in many different settings. In years to come, learners may no longer be closely bound to the schedule of the school day and school year as they have been for generations. Already, new delivery systems and instructional packages make it possible for youngsters to tailor their learning experiences in highly personal and specialized ways, and to regulate their own rates of progress.

"Technology is profoundly influencing virtually all aspects of life."

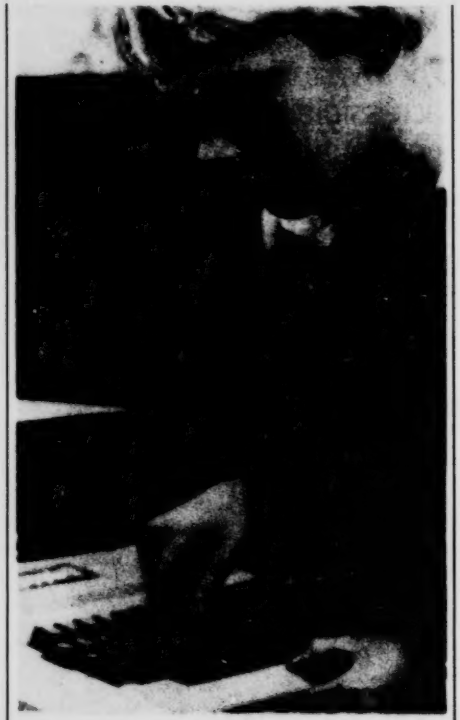


Such developments may naturally change the traditional role of the teacher. In decades ahead, teachers may no longer be at the centre of the instructional process in that they may make fewer decisions about what is to be learned and the instructional strategies to be employed to obtain learning objectives.

Technological innovations also have implications for schools beyond curricular and instructional change. Technology changes patterns of employment and labour requirements. Also, the manner in which technology is used raises broad issues and questions concerning its effects on individuals and the quality of human life in a technological age.

Current Provisions and Conditions

- *No Provincial directions exist which pertain to the use of computers in schools.*
- *Use of computer-based instruction varies from situation to situation and from school to school.*
- *New instructional "packages" are produced by schools and schools sometimes purchase instructional programs packaged and sold by commercial institutions.*



Suggested Questions to Consider

13. *How might technological change affect the schools?*
14. *To what extent can schools capitalize upon technological change?*
15. *How can schools accommodate this technological change and make it part of school operations and programs?*
16. *Are there inherent dangers in accommodating technological change? If so, what are they?*

"Schools tend to be one of the most visible and accessible institutions within communities."

2.7
School-Community Relations

Schools play a unique and integral role in the life of every community. They serve first as institutions for learning, but they also perform other important and diverse social functions. Schools, for example, serve as centres where many community services are coordinated and delivered. Within schools, teachers and administrators frequently work in conjunction with doctors, nurses, health officials, and with child-care and human resources personnel in providing different kinds of remedial and social services to youngsters. In addition, schools are places where adult learning sometimes takes place, where employers and school staff design work-study programs, where safety instruction may be offered, and where many community events and meetings are held. For these and other reasons, schools tend to be one of the most visible and accessible institutions within communities.

It is not surprising, therefore, that the character of school-community relations is of great interest to school professionals and the public alike. Nor is it surprising that schools generally become focal points for discussion about many issues ranging from questions concerning the quality of instruction, to those having to do with social values or the provision of community programs.

Schools, however, operate within this dynamic environment usually without benefit of community consensus on many issues, including lack of agreement among public constituencies about the goals of schooling and the priorities that should be placed on resources made available to schools. Furthermore, community interest in school affairs is often episodic in nature and focused on single issues, not always related to curriculum or instruction. In light of this uncertain social environment around schools, and in light of varying public interests within and among communities, it is generally difficult for school professionals and for elected trustees to decide how to nurture and strengthen school-community relations. Likewise, it is difficult for parents and other community members to know how they may assist schools in the tasks they perform.

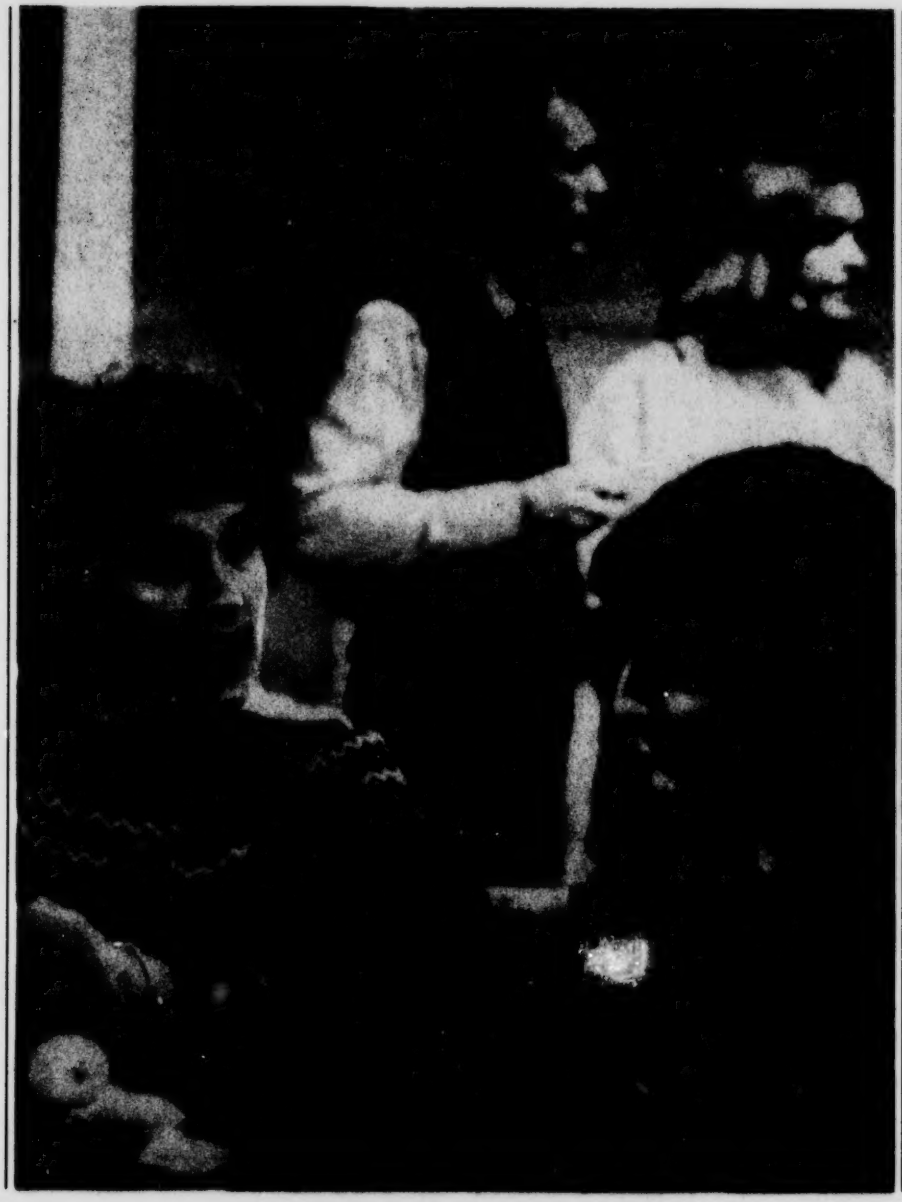
There is agreement, of course, that good school-community relations are important to both the community and the school and that the process of schooling is greatly enhanced by public interest and participation. What is more difficult to determine, however, are strategies which will bring about effective communications between schools and the communities they serve, and which will suggest to schools the nature of community sentiments and public expectations about what schooling should represent.

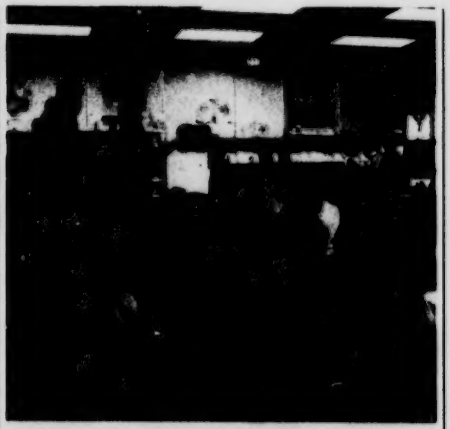
Current Provisions and Conditions

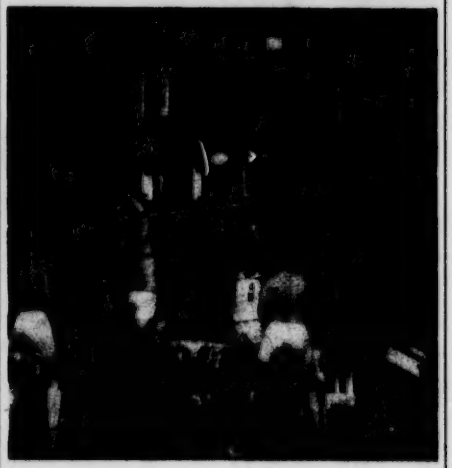
- ***Relationships between home and school vary from school to school and from classroom to classroom.***
- ***Schools are required to report to parents only on matters of pupil progress.***

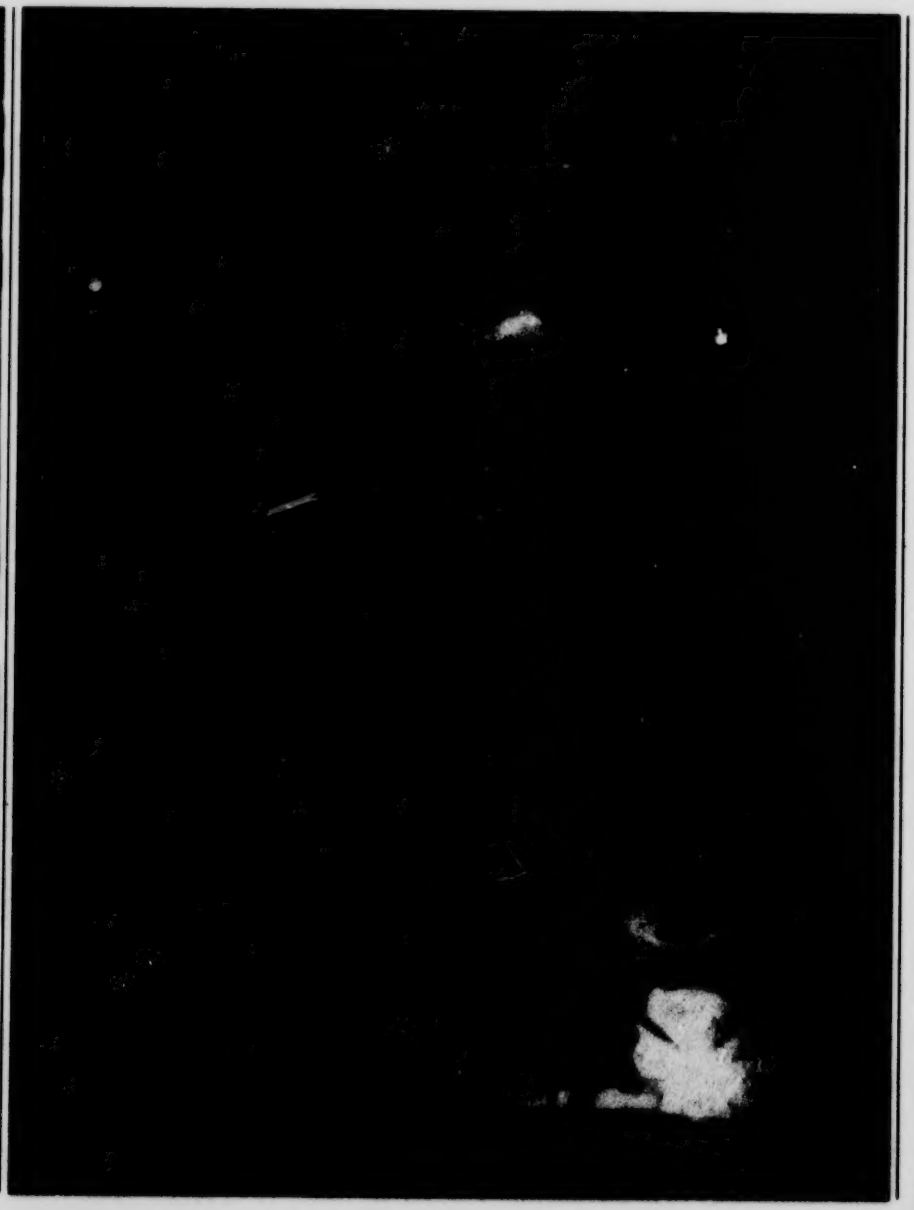
Suggested Questions to Consider

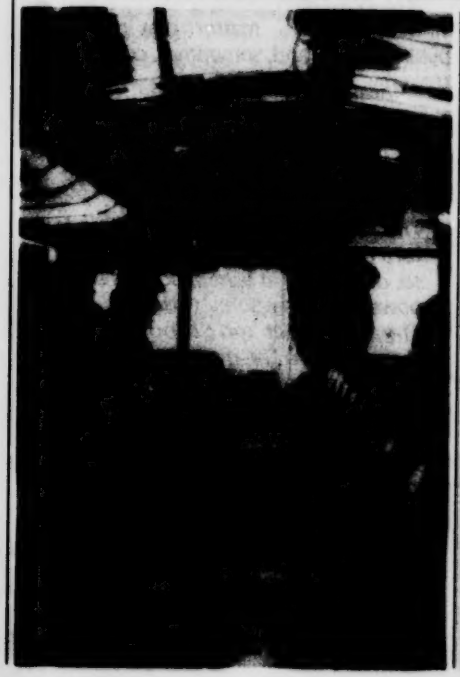
17. ***To what extent should parents and other members of the community be involved with schools, and to what extent should schools be involved in the life of the community?***
18. ***How can school-community relations be strengthened?***
19. ***What should be areas of consultation for trustees, school professionals, parents, and the community?***











III. SCHOOL GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT, AND THE PEOPLE IN THE SYSTEM

3.1

Legislative Provisions for School Governance and Management

Under the terms of Canada's **Constitution Act**, responsibility for schooling is a Provincial matter. In British Columbia, the Provincial Government administers this responsibility through the **School Act** and **School Act Regulation**. In accordance with the principle of lay control for schools, the **School Act** and **School Act Regulation** assign authority for the governance function, otherwise known as the legislative or policy-making function, to the Minister of Education at the Provincial level, and to boards of school trustees at the local level.

In setting out roles and responsibilities for governing representatives, the **School Act** and **School Act Regulation** empower the Minister of Education to supervise and monitor British Columbia schools. In doing so, this legislation makes the Provincial Government accountable to the electorate for this work. At local levels, the **School Act** and **School Act Regulation** empower 75 school boards throughout the Province to administer legislation and regulations respecting schools and these statutes also make school boards accountable in this regard to the Minister of Education and to the communities which elect them.

The **School Act** and **School Act Regulation** also define the management or executive functions to be performed by school officials appointed at Provincial or local levels, including the roles and responsibilities of Ministry officials, school district officials,

"Discussion continues over the roles of provincial and local governments."

and school principals. The **School Act** and **School Act Regulation** give authority to school boards to hire senior-level district staff (including school superintendents and secretary treasurers), to administer school operations and to advise boards in formulating policy. School boards are also responsible for hiring school principals and their assistants at the middle-management level. In addition, school boards hire all instructional and non-instructional staff in schools and provide the physical facilities essential to schooling.

Since the passage of the first public school act in British Columbia more than a century ago, discussion has taken place about the respective roles that the Provincial Government and local boards play in school governance, and the level of local autonomy that should exist. There has likewise been discussion about the nature of the relationship between those who govern and those who manage schools. In light of the fact that schooling is valued by society and, indeed, that it reflects society's values, it is not surprising that debate has occurred over who should govern what, about the relationship between governance and management, and about which level of governance best serves the public good. Certainly, in dealing with major areas of schooling (curriculum, pupil achievement, personnel, operations, and finance) the elected officials who make school policy, and the appointed officials who administer such policy, address matters of vital concern to local communities and to the Province as a whole — matters that inspire public interest and, sometimes, controversy.

Current Provisions and Conditions

- ***Section 93 of the Constitution Act assigns responsibility for schooling to the provinces.***
- ***The Provincial Government administers this responsibility and, in doing so, delegates to school boards certain powers and responsibilities.***
- ***The School Act and School Regulation describe the governing powers of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, the Minister of Education, and school boards.***
- ***The School Act and School Regulation describe the managerial responsibilities of the Ministry of Education, the superintendents and their staffs, and those of principals. In addition, administrative bulletins describe the managerial roles of school district staff and principals.***

Suggested Questions to Consider.

20. *Is the separation of authority to govern the public schools suitable in light of current conditions? Should school board requests for greater autonomy be met? Should school board powers be reduced, expanded, or remain the same? Would the enlargement of school board autonomy improve the effectiveness of schools?*
21. *What processes and mechanisms might be devised to ensure that the Provincial Government and school boards remain accountable to society at large, and responsive to the needs of local communities?*
22. *Is the current system of political accountability satisfactory or should new instruments of accountability, such as recall and local initiative, be considered?*
23. *Should individual schools be permitted to have a school council made up of parents and other community members? To what extent should such councils have powers delegated by school boards?*

3.2

Key Governance and Management Issues

A number of important questions and issues surround the areas of school governance and management. However, because all of these questions and issues cannot be raised within the scope of this review, the Committee has chosen to focus discussion in this section of the paper on matters to do with labour relations, school finance, and school budgets — three topics that appear to be of central and immediate interest both to members of the community and to school professionals.

3.21

Labour Relations

In both public and non-public sectors, it is generally agreed that sound bargaining practices are related to good labour relations, and that good labour relations contribute to a motivated and effective workforce. Within the school community, it is also believed that good staff morale improves the quality of instruction found in schools and thereby enhances pupil learning.

Under existing legislation, most school district employees in British Columbia are represented by formal employee organizations. The British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) represents the professional and economic interests of teachers and school principals but excludes other school administrators from its membership. Other organizations represent non-instructional staff in the bargaining process.

Across the Province, local teacher associations bargain annually with school boards for salaries and benefits and, in instances where settlement is not reached, provision is made for compulsory and binding arbitration. Disputes between school boards and non-instructional employees may be settled by strikes, lockouts, or arbitration.

At present, the scope of labour relations bargaining is governed by three separate pieces of legislation. Negotiations between school boards and local teacher associations are conducted under the **School Act** which tends to limit bargaining to salary and bonus items. In recent years, the scope of bargaining has been broadened somewhat through the passage of the **Public Sector Restraint Act** which allows for the negotiation of procedures concerning personnel terminations. The **Public Sector Restraint Act** likewise applies to non-instructional staff who bargain under the **Labour Code.**

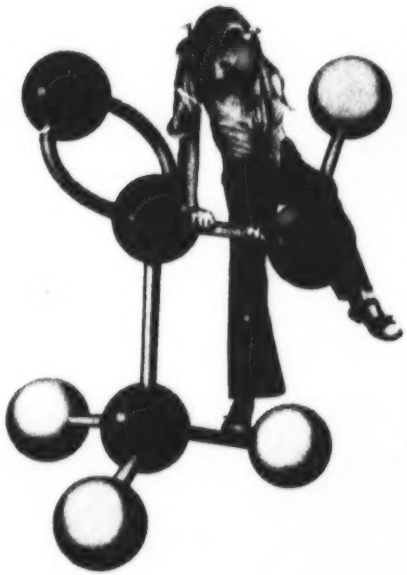
Some individuals feel that arbitrators, on occasion, have extended the scope of bargaining beyond original limits. This has become a contentious situation and one that has been further complicated by the fact that arbitration boards are not directly accountable to the public, even though they now appear to be involved in making decisions which have important implications for public policy. Controversy similarly surrounds negotiations concerning non-instructional job-protection provisions and termination procedures for teachers. Overall, there seems to be a need to find new ways, appropriate to the educational setting, to resolve complex bargaining and employee-relations issues.

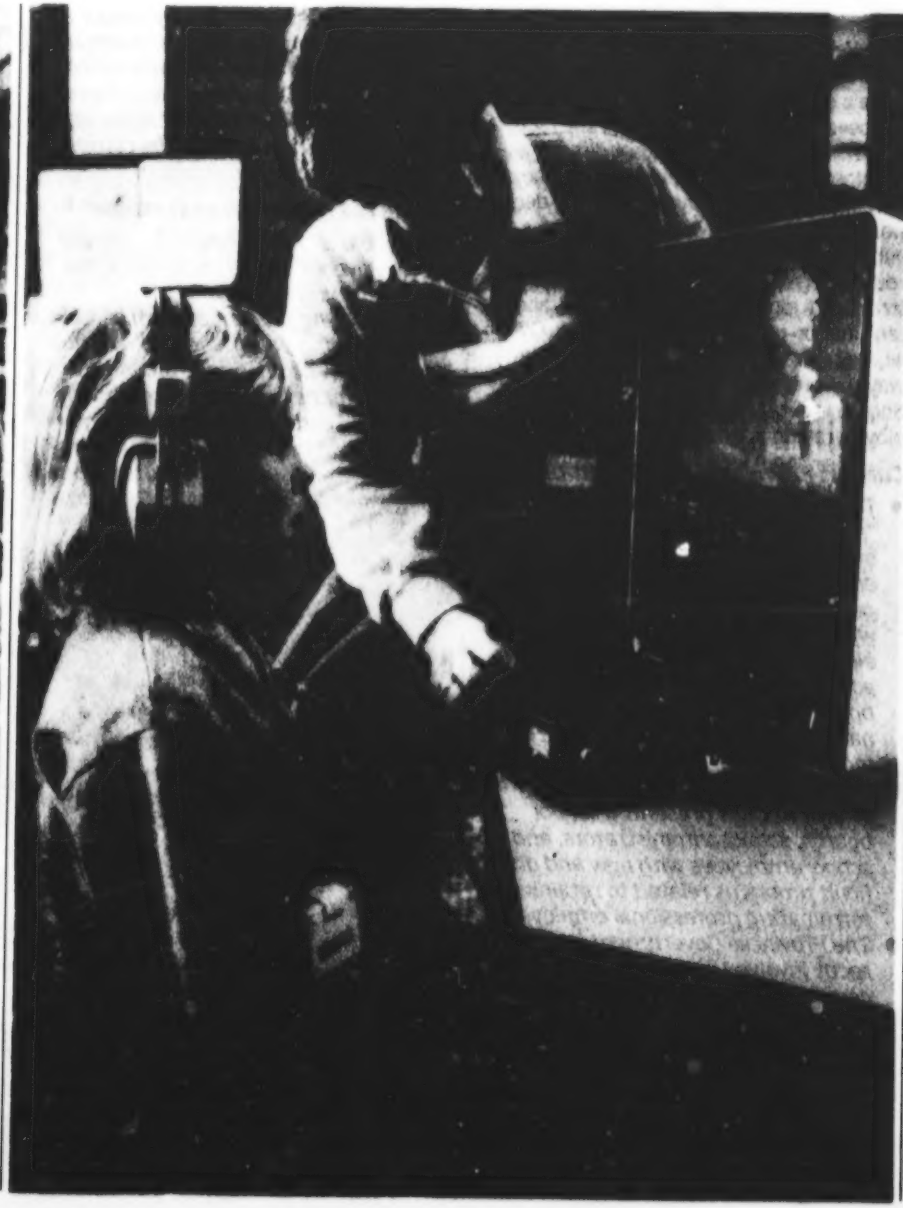
Current Provisions and Conditions

- *Teacher associations now bargain for "salaries and bonuses." The question of what constitutes "bonuses" has emerged as a contentious issue. In general, arbitration boards decide what the term "bonus" means. Some elected representatives and school administrators believe arbitration boards have extended what was originally held to be the scope of bargaining.*
- *The passage of the **Public Sector Restraint Act** has presented school boards, school administrators, and school employees with new and difficult problems related to retaining or terminating professional employees.*
- *The Provincial Government is not directly involved in the bargaining process, although it affects the process by limiting the extent of school board spending.*
- *Bargaining is conducted by school boards and local associations either individually on a district basis, or in larger zones. Disputes arising from school board-local teacher association negotiations are resolved by compulsory and binding arbitration.*

Suggested Questions to Consider

24. *Should all school board employees be covered by the same collective bargaining rules?*
25. *Should the present system of bargaining be retained? If not, how should it be changed? Should the scope of bargaining be expanded?*
26. *Should compulsory and binding arbitration be retained for teachers? Should strikes and lockouts be permitted as an alternative to arbitration?*





3.22

Financing Provincial Schools

Public schooling in British Columbia is financed by revenues raised through local taxation and by Provincial Government grants. Responsibility for school support is thus shared between the Provincial Government and the Province's 75 school districts on a proportional basis determined by Provincial authorities. Under this arrangement, boards of school trustees are responsible for levying school taxes on residential property which are collected by municipal governments and the Provincial Surveyor of Taxes; the Provincial Government levies and collects school taxes on all other classes of property. This system of school finance was developed for two principal reasons: to ensure that quality school programs were made available to youngsters throughout the Province; and, to ensure that each school board was in an equitable position to offer school programs and services — in other words, that equal opportunity for schooling existed in every community. In the past, school boards were authorized to expand school programs and services beyond Provincially-set levels and to support such expansion through increases in local taxes.

The passage of the **Education (Interim) Finance Act** in 1982, however, revised the powers of local school boards. The Province now limits school board spending to levels determined by the Minister of Education. The Province also determines the percentage of a board's budget that will be paid by the Provincial Government and prescribes the portion of a board's budget to be allocated for special education programs. Such changes have had obvious repercussions and have led to discussion and debate on the relative merits of school board and government controlled levels of school spending, and on whether and how the basic education program should be supplemented.

Current Provisions and Conditions

- *Under the terms of the **Education (Interim) Finance Act**, the Provincial Government sets a ceiling on the levels of school board expenditures; defines the part of a board's budget to be spent on special education; limits the collection of school taxes by school boards to residential property only, and determines the cost of the basic education program.*

Suggested Questions to Consider

27. *Who should set levels of school board spending? The Province? Local school boards? The Province and school boards together?*
28. *Should school boards be allowed to raise taxes above those required to sustain basic levels of school service determined by the Province?*
29. *Is the goal of equality in schooling best served by the Province's establishing a basic level of services that must be provided in all school districts?*

3.23

School District Budgets

On January 1, 1984, a new program-based fiscal framework for determining school board budgets was introduced by the Provincial Government. This system applies Provincially-set, service-level formulas to estimate allowable levels of school board spending. In calculating costs of basic education programs and other services for school districts across the Province, these formulas take into account a number of factors including climate, geographical dispersion of population, local costs of living, and the like. School boards are required to deliver programs and services in accordance with the allocations the fiscal framework assigns. However, once a total budget is determined, local boards are free to use revenues allocated to them in whatever ways they consider necessary to provide services, providing they do not reallocate resources targeted for special education programs.

"In 1984 a new framework for determining school board budgets was introduced."

Within school districts, methods of resource allocation vary considerably. Some districts allocate resources among schools on a per pupil basis; others divide budgets into categories for particular services and programs. Recent discussion and debate on school district finance has centred around such matters as adequacy of Provincial service levels, problems of adjusting to the new fiscal framework, and the need to develop effective financial management systems, including consideration of school-based budgeting procedures.

Current Provision and Conditions

- *School district budgets deal with expenditures and revenues. Expenditures refer to all school board expenses such as salaries, classroom supplies, heat, light, transportation, maintenance, and debt repayment. Revenue refers to the funds required for the board to operate.*
- *The largest single expenditure of any school board is that related to salaries and wages. Usually, this comprises approximately 80% of all expenditures.*

- *Provincial Government grants are the largest single source of revenues to school boards. Ordinarily, such grants cover 60% of planned and allowable expenditures but may rise as high as 99% in some districts.*

Suggested Questions to Consider

30. *Should funds to schools be targeted for specific purposes?*
31. *Should financial resources be shared equally between elementary, intermediate, and secondary schools on a per capita basis? Should school districts utilize school-based budgeting systems?*
32. *Are existing levels of funding adequate to meet current public expectations for schools?*

3.3

The Responsibilities and Rights of Parents and Pupils

Parents and pupils enjoy a special relationship with schools since they are the individuals most directly affected by the character and quality of school programs. The fact that schools have come to be seen historically as gateways of opportunity has made questions of pupil and parental entitlement important ones because they are seen to affect an individual's chances in life. Existing legislation, however, does not set out in any comprehensive or unified way the responsibilities and rights of parents and pupils in British Columbia.

At present, the assorted responsibilities and entitlements of parents and pupils are described in various sections of the **School Act** and **School Act Regulation**, and this legislation suggests the balance that should exist between the responsibilities and rights of individuals in a democratic society. For example, legislation outlines a number of rights for parents and pupils, including: parents are entitled to obtain instruction for children for a period of 13 years (from kindergarten to Grade 12); parents are entitled to receive information on children's progress, attendance, and on other matters deemed relevant by school boards; pupils are entitled to receive schooling in a safe, healthy environment; pupils with special needs are entitled to special education within the limits of resources available to school boards for that purpose; pupils are entitled to receive correspondence schooling if they reside in areas where schools are not accessible; and francophone pupils are entitled to take their schooling in French in districts where enrolments make this practical.

To some extent, however, these entitlements are conditional. In other words, parents are entitled to obtain schooling for children providing that both they and their children observe certain rules and regulations. For example: parents must ensure that children attend school during the compulsory attendance period from the age of seven to the age of 15 and provide explanations for children's absences from school; pupils must exhibit acceptable behaviour and not disrupt school procedures; and, pupils and their parents are jointly liable for damages caused to school property.

> "Parents and pupils enjoy a special relationship with schools."

Quite apart from traditional kinds of questions arising from parental and pupil entitlement to schooling and the need for more comprehensive codification of rights, new questions are also emerging that have to do with recent changes in school and society — changes for which existing legislation does not make provision. Changing ideas about human rights, natural justice, parental choice, standards of achievement — as well as technological developments, and the emergence of alternative delivery systems for school programs — all suggest a need to revise current statutory guidelines.

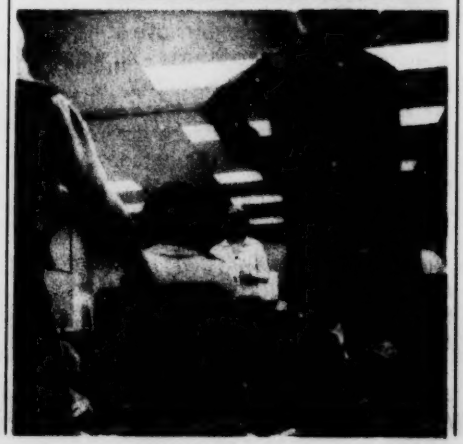
In recent years, for instance, discussion among school professionals, parents, and the community at large has dealt with such matters as: *Should schooling be an absolute right? Should it exist irrespective of a pupil's ability to gain anything meaningful from school? Should parents receive help if they wish to undertake home schooling for their children? Should public schooling be 100% publicly funded? To what extent should educational and other services be made available to pre-school age youngsters? Should the School Act define levels of compulsory achievement rather than periods of compulsory attendance?* And, *who should have access to pupil records?* These issues, of course, are but a few of many issues that may be raised which generally relate to parental and pupil entitlements and responsibilities.

Current Conditions and Provisions

- *Pupil entitlements to schooling are now prescribed only in terms of a school board's responsibility to provide school services.*
- *No other pupil rights are presently guaranteed in legislation.*
- *Pupil responsibilities now include attendance, acceptable behaviour, and application to studies.*

Suggested Questions to Consider

33. *Should parental and pupil responsibilities be specifically codified in law?*
34. *Should parents be allowed to keep their children at home and provide schooling for their youngsters themselves? Should parents receive assistance in schooling children at home?*
35. *Should a period of compulsory schooling exist or should pupils be required instead to attain certain levels of achievement? Is the present period of compulsory attendance for children aged seven to 15 satisfactory? If not, what should be the period of compulsory attendance?*



3.4

Teacher Professionalism

Teacher professionalism is a matter of concern to school professionals and the public alike because, whatever challenges society poses for schools, it is the teacher who is charged ultimately with the task of converting such challenges into learning opportunities for the young. Indeed, classroom teachers play what is, perhaps, the most difficult and most instrumental role in schooling — a role that calls for dedication and a high level of professionalism.

From a number of perspectives, teaching can be seen as a unique profession and one that carries with it many public, parental, and professional expectations. Within the context of an ever-changing and diverse society, teachers are expected to create and maintain a proper environment for learning, to offer sound instruction, to identify and deal with the special needs of pupils in their care, to counsel youngsters, and to serve as suitable role models for the young. Teachers are also expected to assist in coordinating after-hours, extra-curricular programs which provide pupils with social and physical benefits, and which motivate some youngsters to remain in school.

In addition to these traditional responsibilities, today's teachers also face new challenges arising out of changing patterns of family life, changes in the workplace, and the influence of technological developments. It is apparent that, to meet these responsibilities and new challenges, and to assist pupils in attaining desirable outcomes in schooling, skilled, conscientious teachers are essential.

It is also apparent that, to be effective, teachers must earn a level of public trust which will allow them to undertake their work without undue restriction. To establish and maintain this public trust, teachers

must demonstrate their professionalism, and this professionalism must be monitored by the school system and by the profession itself.

As it now stands, teachers prepare for their work in classrooms by undertaking a period of study in institutions of higher education ranging from three to six years, including a year of professional training. Ordinarily, these preparation programs offer specialization in primary, intermediate, or secondary schooling and demand teacher expertise in two academic or curriculum areas. Preparation programs also include a practicum, or practice-teaching period typically ranging from six weeks to six months. At the completion of such programs in British Columbia, teachers are granted a teaching certificate by the Ministry of Education and assigned a salary-level category by the Teacher Qualification Service, a category determined by length of training and experience.

It is noteworthy that the certification teachers receive does not specify the grades or subjects an individual is permitted to teach. It is also noteworthy that, to be allowed to teach in a public school in British Columbia, a teacher must become a member of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation, an organization concerned with both the economic welfare and professional development of teachers.

While many teachers engage in professional development, no requirements exist for teachers to upgrade their training or qualifications throughout the course of their careers. For those trained in British Columbia, certification is permanent. Provisions are made, however, for in-service training. The Ministry of Education grants school districts five non-instructional days annually for teachers to engage in professional development activities. Opportunities for such professional development are made available by Provincial and local specialist associations and local school districts. Professional development programs are offered at both school and district-wide levels.

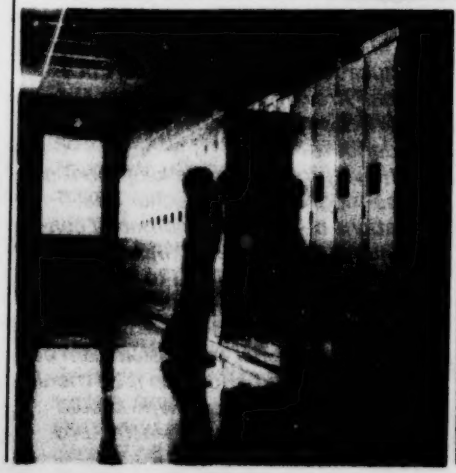
Current Provisions and Conditions

- *Teacher organizations are charged with responsibility for economic and professional issues.*
- *No provisions exist for public scrutiny of professional ethics and disciplinary procedures.*
- *Universities control entry and training programs for the teaching profession.*
- *Certification to teach is granted by the Ministry of Education, primarily on the basis of university graduation.*
- *Certificates, once obtained, are for life unless suspended or cancelled for incompetence or misconduct. No requirements exist to maintain or upgrade qualifications.*
- *Under present circumstances, professional excellence can be recognized only through assignment to positions of school administration, or through other special responsibilities.*

"Today's teachers also face new challenges."

Suggested Questions to Consider

36. *Do current training programs for teachers offer adequate preparation for careers in the classroom? Who should set policies for teacher education programs and certification? Are current provisions for in-service or professional development adequate?*
37. *Should professional development or the "upgrading" of teacher qualifications be made a condition of continuing employment? Should teachers be permitted to teach only in the subject and grade areas in which they trained?*
38. *How can teacher professionalism be demonstrated? How can it be monitored and evaluated? Who should monitor and evaluate teacher professionalism?*



3.5

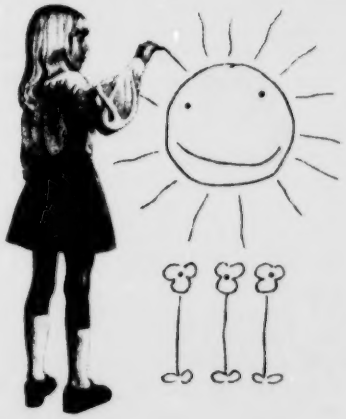
Administrative Professionalism

It is generally held that sound instructional programs depend on effective management and leadership. Professional administration, it is believed, plays an integral support role to classroom activity and does much to influence the quality of instruction and the climate for work and learning inside schools. In British Columbia, professional administration exists at three levels: the administration of the Provincial system is undertaken by the Ministry of Education; school district administration is carried out by superintendents and the other members of the central office staff hired by the school board; the administration of individual schools is the responsibility of principals appointed by school boards on the advice of the superintendent.

"Sound instructional programs depend on effective management and leadership."

The School Act and School Act Regulation, as well as administrative bulletins, set out the managerial roles and responsibilities for administrators at these levels throughout the system. Principals, for example, are responsible for the management and operations of schools in their care: they determine pupil placement and programs; they assign workloads, schedule classes, and supervise and evaluate teachers; they also supervise pupil conduct and exercise disciplinary authority; and, in addition, they manage school budgets and maintain school records.

As the size and complexity of schools and school systems have grown, there has been much discussion about how to ensure administrative effectiveness and how responsibility and authority should be assigned to the various levels of administration. For instance, questions have been raised about which administrative functions should be centralized or decentralized and whether centralized or decentralized models of administration lead to greater efficiency and effectiveness.

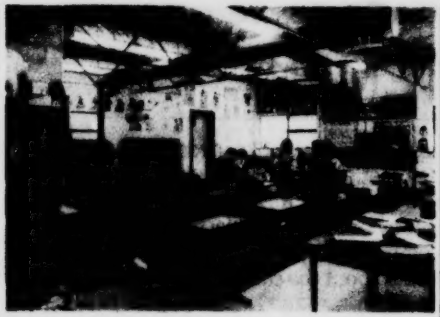


Current Provisions and Conditions

The Minister of Education has a general responsibility to see that in all schools the intent of Provincially elected representatives is met.

To meet this end, superintendents of schools are given responsibility for supervising all instructional programs in the districts and are responsible to the Minister for attaining standards of public education required by the Minister.

Schools are administered by principals or head teachers reporting to principals.



- *Most principals in British Columbia have at least six years' teaching experience and a post-graduate degree in educational administration or in another area. In general, individuals who become principals have had several years' experience as a vice-principal, an assistant to a principal, a head teacher, or a department head.*
- *Principals are "assigned" to their positions by the school board, usually acting on the advice of the superintendent. This assignment may be on a "continuing" basis or it may be for a specified term. In either case, principals continue to remain "teachers" who are charged with a special role to perform.*

Suggested Questions to Consider

39. *Should school principals be granted greater authority in designing school programs? Or in administering resources allocated to their schools?*
40. *If individual schools have their own school councils what would such a development mean to the role and responsibilities of principals?*
41. *Should school principals be part of an employee bargaining unit? If so, should the bargaining unit be the same one that represents teachers?*

"Our treatment of these subjects, we hope, will promote greater discussion."

IV. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Presenting an overview of the issues and questions facing public schooling is a difficult assignment at best, considering the varied and, sometimes-conflicting views that people hold about the purposes, tasks, and effectiveness of schools. Nevertheless, the Advisory Committee has tried to undertake its assignment by outlining as objectively as it could a framework for discussion which might assist community members, their elected representatives, and school staff in deliberations and debate about the current state of schooling and the directions schools might take in years ahead.

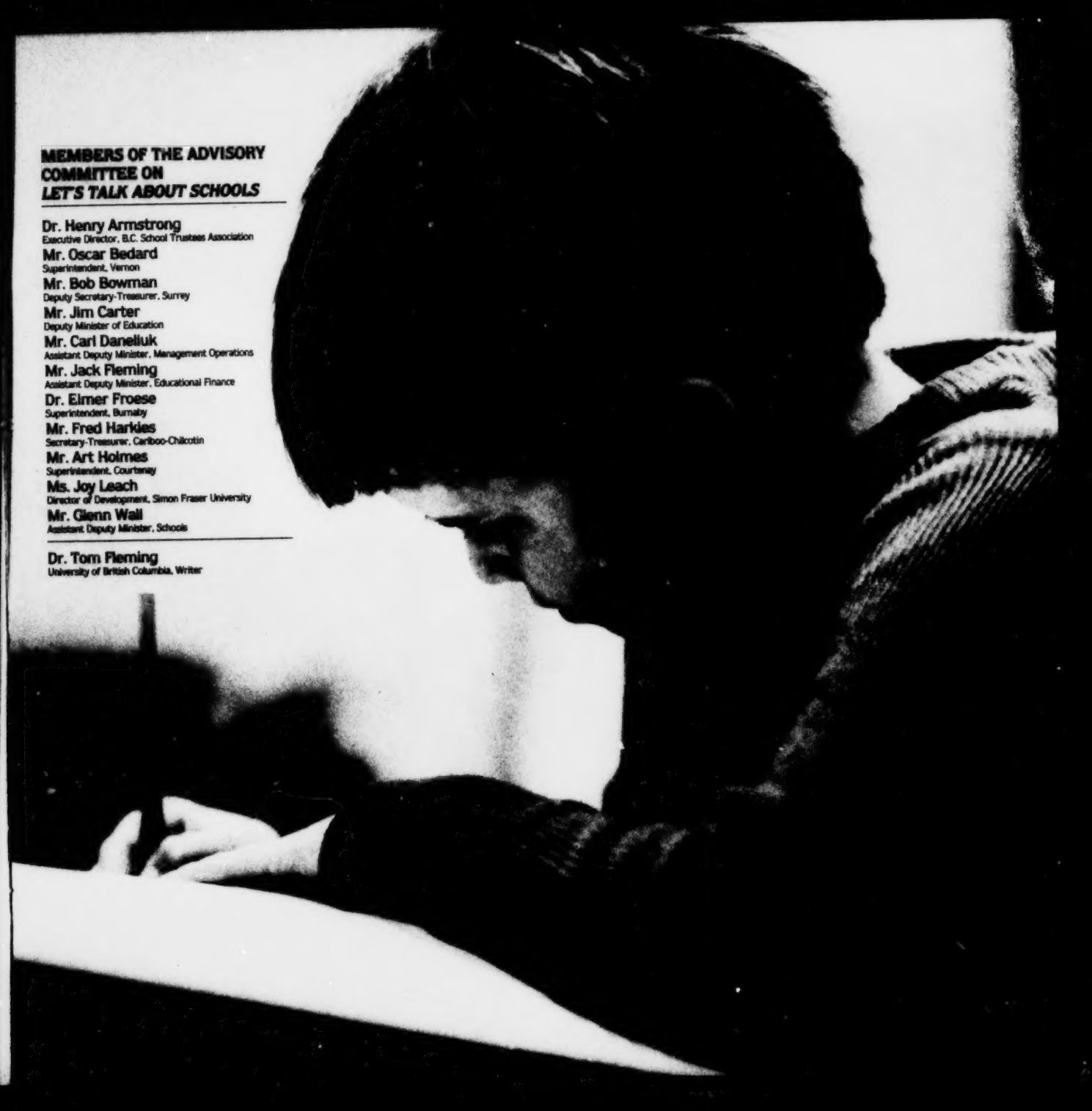
In this discussion paper, we have attempted to provide a context for understanding what appear to be some of the most significant topics in public schooling in British Columbia today. We have examined such matters as the role of schools in society, the goals of education and schooling, school standards, community relations, and the influence of diversity and technology on schooling. In addition, we have looked at legislative provisions for schools and at some important structural elements to do with governance and management, finance, labour relations, parental and pupil rights, and administrative and teacher professionalism. Our treatment of these subjects, we hope, will promote greater discussion between and among school professionals and the public at large in school districts across the Province.

Throughout our work, we have tried to describe the importance of schools to society and the high expectations communities have of schools and of those who work in them. We have also been conscious of the importance of encouraging public interest and participation in schooling. It is the Committee's belief that consequential matters of public policy, such as schooling, should be examined in the broad daylight of public debate, and that our school governance and management systems should be informed by community views and feelings about schools. Such a process, we think, is vital to the well-being of a democratic society.

In conclusion, the Advisory Committee would like to thank the Minister of Education for providing the opportunity to participate in what we regard to be an important assignment. We would also like to acknowledge assistance given to us by the Ministry of Education and by former members of this Committee who generously gave their time and ideas.

NOTES

NOTES



MEMBERS OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON *LET'S TALK ABOUT SCHOOLS*

Dr. Henry Armstrong
Executive Director, B.C. School Trustees Association

Mr. Oscar Bedard
Superintendent, Vernon

Mr. Bob Bowman
Deputy Secretary-Treasurer, Surrey

Mr. Jim Carter
Deputy Minister of Education

Mr. Carl Daneliuk
Assistant Deputy Minister, Management Operations

Mr. Jack Fleming
Assistant Deputy Minister, Educational Finance

Dr. Elmer Froese
Superintendent, Burnaby

Mr. Fred Harkies
Secretary-Treasurer, Cariboo-Chilcotin

Mr. Art Holmes
Superintendent, Courtenay

Ms. Joy Leach
Director of Development, Simon Fraser University

Mr. Glenn Wall
Assistant Deputy Minister, Schools

Dr. Tom Fleming
University of British Columbia, Writer